

Message Text

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71

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 DRC-01 /157 W

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5097

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY RABAT

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, UK, XF

SUBJECT: COMMONS DEBATE ON MIDDLE EAST AND PRELIMINARY

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BRITISH REACTION TO US ALERT MEASURES

1. FOREIGN SECRETARY SIR ALEC DOUGLAS-HOME MADE BRIEF STATEMENT TO COMMONS ON 25 OCTOBER OUTLINING HIS UNDERSTANDING OF CURRENT MIDDLE EAST SITUATION. SIR ALEC STRESSED HOPE THAT CEASE-FIRE WOULD ENDURE AND THAT NEGOTIATIONS WOULD BE IMMEDIATELY UNDERTAKEN AS ENVISIONED IN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION OF 22 OCTOBER. HE EMPHASIZED HMG BELIEF THAT UN FORCE SHOULD BE EMPLOYED TO GUARANTEE DEMILITARIZED ZONE AND REITERATED PREVIOUS BRITISH OFFER TO PARTICIPATE IN A UN EMERGENCY FORCE IF REQUIRED TO DO SO. AT END OF STATEMENT FOREIGN SECRETARY ADVERTED TO REPORTS THAT SOVIETS MIGHT HAVE BEEN PLANNING SEND TROOPS TO AREA AND TO US FORCES ALERT ORDERS. HE NOTED THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER WOULD BE GIVING PRESS CONFERENCE LATER IN AFTERNOON AND DID NOT WISH TO "ANTICIPATE WHAT HE WILL BE SAYING THEN."
2. FOLLOWING THIS STATEMENT, LABOR SHADOW FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT SITUATION AND VIEW THAT ANY UNILATERAL SOVIET OR US ACTION IN AREA WOULD BE IMPRUDENT. HE STATED THAT AMERICAN RESPONSE TO SITUATION SEEMED LIKE OVERREACTION AND ASKED IF HMG HAD BEEN CONSULTED ABOUT US AIRFIELDS WHICH OPERATE IN UK AND WHAT THE STATE OF MILITARY ALERT WAS. SIR ALEC REPLIED THAT THOUGH HE WAS IN TOUCH WITH US SECSTATE, AT THE MOMENT HE DID NOT KNOW ENOUGH TO ANSWER CALLAGHAN'S QUESTIONS.
3. DURING SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION A NUMBER OF LABOR M.P.'S RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT RELATIONSHIP OF US ALERTING ACTION TO US DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION. MICHAEL BARNES ASKED IF FOREIGN SECRETARY SATISFIED THAT SUFFICIENT RESTRAINTS WERE IN OPERATION TO PREVENT UNBALANCED DECISIONS IN VIEW OF STRAIN WHICH PRESIDENT OF US WAS UNDER AT PRESENT. TO THIS, FONSEC REPLIED THAT HE HOPED THIS WOULD NOT INFLUENCE PRESIDENT AT ALL AND THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO CONDUCT HIS FOREIGN POLICY EXACTLY AS BEFORE WITHOUT ANY RESTRAINTS IMPOSED BY DOMESTIC SITUATION.
4. THIS EXCHANGE AND FACT THAT FONSEC FELT HIMSELF UNABLE TO CONFIRM PRIOR US CONSULTATION RE US FORCES ALERT HAS NATURALLY GENERATED HEAVY PRESS COVERAGE AND SOME EDITORIAL COMMENT. MOST PAPERS DID NOT EMPHASIZE UNCLASSIFIED

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FOREIGN SECRETARY'S IMPLIED ADMISSION THAT UK NOT INFORMED OF US ALERT, BUT TWO NEWSPAPERS HEADLINED THIS ASPECT AND RADIO AND TV COMMENTATORS HAVE ALSO POINTED UP LACK OF US CONSULTATION WITH UK. GUARDIAN CARRIED TWO ARTICLES, ONE HEADLINED "THE END OF A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" AND THE OTHER "BRITAIN IN DARK OVER US ALERT." DAILY MAIL SAYS "SIR ALEC SNUBBED AS NIXON KEEPS FRIENDS IN DARK." HEAVY PLAY IS GIVEN IN ALL MEDIA TO FACT THAT

US BASES IN UK WERE INVOLVED IN ALERT.

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Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
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